

**AZDES JOBS Privatization Focus Groups**  
**June 20-24, 2005**

*Summary Report*

**Overview**

In preparation for issuing the Request for Proposals (RFP) to privatize the Jobs Program, the Department of Economic Security (DES) conducted twelve (12) focus groups to gain important feedback from representatives from current client and case manager groups, the program's two key stakeholders.

Participants were asked to comment on those aspects of the current TANF JOBS program operated by Arizona DES that were the most and least effective; and presented the best ideas for change and improvement. This feedback was used to influence the final design of the privatized JOBS Program and the drafting of RFP instructions for potential vendors.

A total of twelve (12) focus groups were conducted in June 20-24, 2005 with TANF clients and case managers selected randomly by the regional DES offices from communities within six (6) communities: Phoenix, Tucson, Sierra Vista, Flagstaff, Globe and Parker. Each of the 1.5 hour focus groups were facilitated by DES staff and consultants from the Pima Prevention Partnership (PPP), a Tucson-based non-profit community development agency. The sessions were held at DES offices in each of the towns and cities, and clients were provided with transportation to and from the focus groups. A series of five (5) questions were posed to each of the focus groups, and responses were recorded via tape recorder and/or written notes.

The client participants varied in terms of gender, age, presence of disability, family status, and length of time in the TANF and JOBS system. Case managers also varied in gender and in years of experience in the TANF JOBS program and other related DES offices.

While each of the focus groups uncovered a number of unique issues, common themes surfaced in all of the meetings of the two stakeholder groups. These common elements are outlined below.

## DES JOBS Client Focus Groups

**Question 1: What helped you the most or is helping you now to improve your ability to get a job or keep your current job?**

Most Common Themes

1. An experienced Case Manager who respects the clients, provides a lot of structure/support
2. Volunteer work experience
3. Job training
4. Child care
5. Transportation assistance (car repairs, insurance, cash for gas)

**Question 2: What else, that is not now happening, do you think would help you get a job or keep the job you have?**

Most Common Themes

1. Increased support by Case Managers in finding and keeping a job
2. More flexibility for individual Case Managers in determining what activities count toward mandatory hours
3. More job opportunities and more varied job opportunities

**Question 3: What road blocks have you experienced in using the system?**

Most Common Themes

1. It is very hard to get a GED when the requirement is for 35 hours of community service at the same time. As long as the person is getting good grades and working toward goals, it would be better to stay with school, not interrupt to meet other requirements.
2. Support for car insurance lasts for 6 months, but should be expanded, as needed, up to one year
3. Use of clothing vouchers is too complicated and requires too much difficult going back and forth: a debit card- type voucher could be used for particular stores and coded for appropriate clothes.

**Question 4: What does the JOBS case manager do that is really helping you get a job or keep the job you have?**

Most Common Themes

1. Vouching for the client with employers and serving as their advocate
2. Helping with how to make a resume
3. Keeping track of clients so that they have structure and support all of the time

**Question 5: What one thing could DES do to improve the TANF JOBS program?**

Most Common Themes

- Resource Center and Job Bank
- Remedial, GED and ESOL classes and occupational training
- Information packets (maps, employer contacts, interviewing tips)
- Mandatory job readiness assessment and training
- Help with addressing employment/legal issues related to felony records
- Job development, particularly for people living in rural communities where few jobs are available

## DES JOBS Case Manager Focus Groups

**Question 1: What do you believe to be the most important function, service or other component of the JOBS program that helps clients improve their ability to get a job or keep a job?**

Most Common Themes

1. Treating clients with respect
2. Flexible, accessible child care
3. Transportation support

**Question 2: What else, that is not now happening, do you think would help your clients get a job or keep the job they currently have?**

Most Common Themes

1. Better relationships with other public and community agencies and services
2. Separate, more intensive services for “hardest to serve” population

**Question 3: What is the single most important thing that you do as a JOBS case manager that really helps clients get and keep jobs?**

Most Common Themes

1. Building and maintaining trusting, respectful relationships with clients
2. Focusing on self-responsibility of clients; holding them accountable
3. Providing a lot of structure and support

**Question 4: What one thing could DES do to improve the TANF JOBS program?**

Most Common Themes

1. Smaller caseloads
2. Empowering case managers to make decisions “on the spot”
3. Greater flexibility in utilizing TANF services that are available